

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A composition comprising a intermedin peptide, wherein said intermedin peptide comprises at least 18 contiguous amino acids of the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:2.
2. A composition according to Claim 1, wherein said peptide comprises at least 30 contiguous amino acids of the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:2.
3. The composition according to Claim 1, wherein said composition further comprises a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.
4. A method of of inducing the release of prolactin in a host, the method comprising administering to an individual the composition of Claim 3.
5. A method for cardioprotection, the method comprising administering to an individual the composition of Claim 3.
6. A method for reduction of hypertension, the method comprising comprising administering to an individual the composition of Claim 3.
7. A method for regulation of gastric motility, the method comprising administering to an individual the composition of Claim 3.
8. A method for the regulation of growth hormone release, the method comprising administering to an individual the composition of Claim 3.
9. An isolated nucleic acid molecule comprising a cDNA sequence encoding a mammalian intermedin protein that will hybridize under stringent conditions of 50°C or higher in the presence of 0.1XSSC to the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:1 or encodes the peptide in SEQ ID NO:2.
10. An isolated nucleic acid according to Claim 8, wherein said cDNA sequence is of human origin.

11. An isolated nucleic acid molecule according to Claim 9, wherein said nucleic acid comprises the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO:1=.

12. The nucleic acid of Claim 10, further comprising a vector sequence.

13. The nucleic acid of Claim 10, wherein said vector comprises a transcription cassette operably linked to said intermedin cDNA sequence.

14. An antibody that specifically recognizes an intermedin peptide.

15. A non-human transgenic animal model for intermedin gene function wherein said transgenic animal comprises an introduced alteration in a intermedin gene.

16. A method of screening for biologically active agents that modulate intermedin function, the method comprising:

combining a candidate biologically active agent with any one of:

(a) a mammalian intermedin peptide;

(b) a cell comprising a nucleic acid encoding a mammalian intermedin peptide; or

(c) a non-human transgenic animal model for intermedin gene function comprising one of: (i) a knockout of an intermedin gene; (ii) an exogenous and stably transmitted mammalian intermedin gene sequence; and

determining the effect of said agent on intermedin function.